


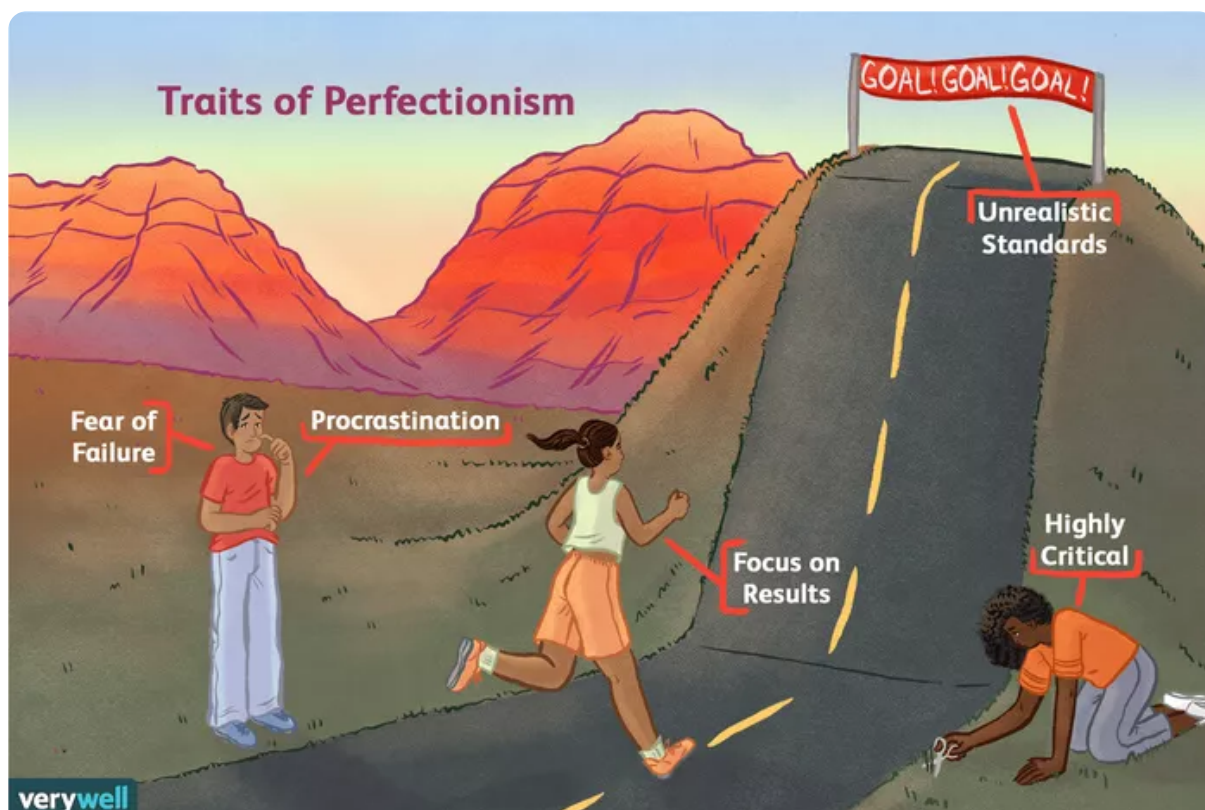
Perfectionist Traits: Do These Sound Familiar?

Are Too-High Expectations Wrecking Your Inner Peace?

By [Elizabeth Scott, MS](#) |  Reviewed by [Amy Morin, LCSW](#) on February 22, 2020

If you're wondering whether or not you're a [perfectionist](#), there's a good chance you are, at least to a degree. And if we're being honest here, there's also a good chance you have some investment in the identity of being a perfectionist because of the positive connotations of the word "perfect"—who doesn't want to be perfect?

It's important to educate yourself about what constitutes perfectionism and why it's seen as a negative thing. You can decide how much you want to work at shrugging off these traits and learn strategies to accomplish your goal.



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Common Traits of a Perfectionist

The problem with perfectionism—and the reason you'll want to know if you possess any perfectionistic traits—is that perfectionists actually tend to achieve *less* and stress *more* than regular high achievers.

Being a perfectionist makes it more challenging to meet the goal of being perfect, or even of reaching a personal best.

Perfectionists are a lot like [high achievers](#), but with some key differences. The following are ten telltale traits of perfectionists, that you may be able to spot in yourself or in the people you know. Do any of these sound familiar?

All-or-Nothing Thinking

Perfectionists, like high achievers, tend to set high goals and work hard toward them. However, a high achiever can be satisfied with doing a great job and achieving excellence (or something close), even if their very high goals aren't completely met. Perfectionists will accept nothing less than perfection. "Almost perfect" is seen as failure.

Related: [How to Overcome All-or-Nothing Thinking](#)

Highly Critical

Perfectionists are more critical of themselves and others than high achievers. While high achievers take pride in their accomplishments and tend to be supportive of others, perfectionists tend to spot mistakes and imperfections. They hone in on imperfections and have trouble seeing anything else. They're more judgmental and hard on themselves and on others when "failure" does occur.

Pushed by Fear

High achievers tend to be *pulled* toward their goals and by a desire to achieve them. They are happy with any steps made in the right direction. Perfectionists, on the other hand, tend to be *pushed* toward their goals by a fear of *not* reaching them and see anything less than a perfectly met goal as a failure.

Unrealistic Standards

Unfortunately, a perfectionist's goals aren't always even reasonable. While high achievers can set their goals high, perhaps enjoying the fun of going a little further once goals are reached, perfectionists often set their initial goals out of reach.

High achievers tend to be happier and more successful than perfectionists in the pursuit of the goals.

Focussed on Results

High achievers can enjoy the process of chasing a goal as much or more than the actual reaching of the goal itself. Conversely, perfectionists see the goal and nothing else. They're so concerned about meeting the goal and avoiding the dreaded failure that they can't enjoy the process of growing and striving.

Depressed by Unmet Goals

Perfectionists are much less happy and easygoing than high achievers. While high achievers are able to bounce back fairly easily from disappointment, perfectionists tend to beat themselves up much more and wallow in negative feelings when their high expectations go unmet.

Fear of Failure

Perfectionists are also much [more afraid to fail](#) than are high achievers. Because they place so much stock in results and become so disappointed by anything less than perfection, failure becomes a very scary prospect. And, since anything less than perfection is seen as failure, perfectionists sometimes put off things until the last minute.

Related: [Healthy Ways to Cope With Failure](#)

Procrastination

It seems paradoxical that perfectionists would be prone to [procrastination](#), as that trait can be detrimental to productivity, but perfectionism and procrastination do tend to go hand in hand. This is because, fearing failure as they do, perfectionists will sometimes worry so much about doing something imperfectly that they become immobilized and fail to do anything at all.

Procrastination can lead to greater feelings of failure, further perpetuating a vicious and paralyzing cycle.

Defensiveness

Because a less-than-perfect performance is so painful and scary to perfectionists, they tend to take constructive criticism defensively, while high achievers can see criticism as valuable information to help their future performance.

Low Self-Esteem

High achievers tend to have equally high esteem; not so with perfectionists. Perfectionists tend to be very self-critical and unhappy and suffer from [low self-esteem](#). They can also be lonely or isolated as their critical nature and rigidity can push others away as well. This can lead to lower self-esteem.

A Word From Verywell

If you see some of these perfectionist traits in yourself, don't despair. Recognizing that a change may be needed is a very important first step toward creating a more easygoing nature and achieving the inner peace and real success that comes from overcoming perfectionism and being able to say that "almost perfect" is still a job very well done.

Related: [Why Some Perfectionist Traits Can Be Healthy](#)

Article Sources

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